Post-Event Summary Report

Name of the Event: BoomerANG Visioning Conference and Community Comment Sessions

Date of Event: May 24 (Visioning Conference) June 21, 22, 23, 27, & 28

Location of Event:
    Visioning Conference, May 24: Normandy Farms Conference Center, Blue Belle Pennsylvania;

    Community Comment Sessions:

    June 21 Montgomery County Human Services Center, Norristown
    June 22 Montgomery County College West Campus, Pottstown
    June 23 Willow Grove Township Hall, Willow Grove, Pennsylvania
    June 27 Upper Merion Community Hall, Upper Merion, Pennsylvania
    June 28 Indian Springs Senior Center, Souderton, Pennsylvania.

Number of Persons Attending:
    Visioning Conference: 125
    Community Comment Sessions: 125

Sponsoring Organizations: The BoomerANG Steering Committee

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Priority Issue #1 Aging Services

  A) How to ensure that all existing senior centers are accessible, functional and appealing to Baby Boomers and other new participants;
  B) How to make sure all information regarding senior services and opportunities are available to all residents of Montgomery County.

Barriers:

- Older buildings with many barriers
- Lack of identified expertise;
- Lack of available funding;
- Centers which don't provide information in a timely or complete fashion;
- Turf issues

Solutions:

- Working with municipal planning commissions and a team from a local school of architecture or others review all senior centers in Montgomery County for accessibility, functionality and appeal;
- Develop an ad campaign regarding older adults as assets in Montgomery County, and utilizing that ad campaign draw attention to a centralized source of information regarding opportunities and services for older adults.

Priority Issue #2: Civic Engagement

A) How to more effectively engage more seniors as volunteers;
B) How to easily identify volunteer opportunities for potential volunteers.

Barriers:

- Lack of volunteering standards;
- Lack of a central source of information about volunteering opportunities;
- Little training available for agencies seeking to use volunteers;
- An "old" conceptualization of volunteering.

Solutions:

- Senior centers, utilizing a network of contacts and a series of meetings communicate needs and develop opportunities to effectively engage diverse senior volunteers;
- OAAS create a clearinghouse to identify, engage, organize, and recognize the unique skills of a broad base of senior volunteers.

Priority Issue #3: Collaboration

A) How to attract other organizations, agencies, businesses, etc. to collaborate with senior serving organizations;
B) How to find ways for organizations more effectively.

Barriers:

- Poor concept among non senior serving agency about the work done by the aging network;
- Few opportunities to meet and exchange information;
- Little knowledge about issues of seniors.

Solutions:

- With OAAS and the senior centers taking a lead develop an ad campaign and using positive images promote the benefits of being a boomer and using available older adult services to improve/maintain quality of life for Montgomery County's older adults;
- Promote/strengthen collaboration among community based human service and other organizations by identifying commonalities, creating ways in which organizations can collaborate for example with municipalities for intergenerational programs, developing information about shared concerns such as access to affordable health care and housing, etc.;

Priority Issue #4 Health and Wellness
A) How to improve health services to older adults;
B) How to improve access to older adults, including Boomers.

Barriers:

- Health services are expensive;
- Few health professionals are trained in geriatric medicine and gerontology;
- Little available funds to attract professionals to work in the County.

Solutions:
- Attract, educate, and reimburse social workers, medical professionals, etc., qualified in geriatrics through the creation of

subsidized internships, educational reimbursements, mentorship programs, and job placement programs;
- Improve access for those 50+ to health and wellness programs through a referral program from MDs to dieticians, OTs, PTs, MSWs and other professionals;

Priority Issue # 5: Housing

A) How to develop more affordable housing for Montgomery County's older adults;
B) How to make property taxes more affordable to older adults.

Barriers:

- Most new housing is too expensive for low and moderate income older adults;
- Little prior history of developing affordable housing;
- Issues of zoning and planning;
- Property taxes are essential to retain the high level of public services and maintain the environment enjoyed by Montgomery County's residents.

Solutions:

- Create a comprehensive program to develop more affordable housing for older adults in Montgomery County by the creation of an affordable housing committee to assess what already exists; evaluate community needs; and develop proposals for affordable housing alternatives. Such a committee should include OAAS and representatives from MontCo.'s senior centers;
- Create a commission to explore how to make property taxes more affordable for older adults. The commission should include in its work a review of programs in other jurisdictions across the United States.

Priority Issue # 5: Transportation

A) How to provide more available public transportation for older adults;
B) How to let the public know about public transportation.

Barriers:

- Prior history of unsuccessful public transportation efforts in parts of Montgomery County;
- Few resources to reach into the more "remote" areas;
- Lack of coordination among potential providers;
- Prior decisions regarding rail service.

Solutions:

- Partner with business to encourage expansion of private transportation capacity to provide service to Montgomery County's older adults;
- Coordinate Transportation and related services to maximize efficiency and capacity of existing systems;
- Educate the public, providers, and policy makers about transportation options including availability and market services to the community;